DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 354 822 HE 026 242

AUTHOR	Heaslip, Penny
TITLE	Creating the Thinking Practitioner: Critical Thinking in Clinical Practice.
PUB DATE	92
NOTE	9p.
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Clinical Teaching (Health Professions); *Critical Thinking; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Notetaking; Nurses; Nursing; *Nursing Education; Problem Solving; Thinking Skills; *Writing Processes; Writing Skills
IDENTIFIERS	British Columbia; *Nursing Students

ABSTRACT

This essay looks at training nurses in British Columbia (Canada) to be critical thinkers through the use of nurses' narrative notes of patient care. The paper argues that the registered nurse can use the Nursing Process, a nursing problem solving framework that relies on the nurse's ability to think logically, to critically reflect on care provided and to ensure safe practice. The Process is a five-step thinking framework based on a nursing assessment of patient needs in which subjective and objective data are collected. The data are analyzed, the problem is identified, and plans are created for resolution of the problem. The validity of the goals and the outcomes of the interventions are evaluated in the final step of the process. Each phase should be reflected in the patient care record. Teaching strategies that promote critical thinking skills in nursing students can be designed also as a means to promote self-evaluation. Analytic writing exercises based on the narrative nursing notes written by the student are used to facilitate independent learning. Students who are given opportunities to reflect on the nursing notes they have recorded can begin to recognize the imperfections in their thought processes and eventually to become independent critical thinkers capable of assuring the provision of safe, quality patient care. (JB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED354822

Creating the Thinking Practitioner: Critical Thinking in Clinical Practice

Penny Heaslip B.Sc.N., M.Ed., R N.
University College of the Cariboo
Kamloops, B. C., V2C-5N3

HE026242

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

PENNY HEASLIP

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

2 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Abstract

Creating the Thinking Practitioner: Critical Thinking in Clinical Nursing Practice

Promoting student thinking in active clinical nursing practice requires self-evaluation strategies to help students recognize the effectiveness of their thinking. Students patterns of thinking need to be illuminated and evaluated according to legal, professional and critical thinking standards. The development of thinking in students is linked to the sophistication of each student's ability to apply the Nursing Process; a nursing science, problem solving framework, in clinical practice. The development of students' abilities to think their way independently through clinical practice situations is reflected in the nurse's narrative notes as part of the legal record of each patient's stay in hospital. The purpose of this interactive presentation is to share self-evaluation techniques used to promote nursing students' abilities to use critical thinking, professional standards and legal guidelines to self-evaluate their own nursing notes so that they internalize the thinking standards of the profession of nursing.

Creating the Thinking Practitioner: Critical Thinking in Clinical Nursing Practice

The focus of nursing education in British Columbia is to prepare an independent, professional nurse who is able to meet the Registered Nurses Association new graduate competencies and skills. The registered nurse must be a competent practitioner who is able to demonstrate skill in interpersonal relationships, psychomotor skills, and critical thinking. It is an expectation that a British Columbia nurse graduate who is able to demonstrate critical thinking will have information gathering skills, focusing skills, remembering and organizing skills. Also included, are the skills of analyzing, generating, integrating and evaluating nursing care (R.N.A.B.C., 1990). The nurse graduate who is competent as a critical thinker can critically reflect on the quality of care provided in practice. Ultimately, in a legal and ethical sense, each individual nurse is personally responsible for patient safety and the quality of care provided. Critical thinking skills are an integral competency necessary to ensure quality of patient care. The application of the Nursing Process; a nursing problem solving framework relies on the nurse's ability to think logically and to critically reflect on care provided there by ensuring safe practice. Critical thinking in nursing can be defined as the ability to think not only systematically and logically but also with an openness to both, question and reflect on the thinking processes used in clinical decision-making to ensure safe nursing practice and quality care.

Critical thinking in nursing practice is necessary to ensure safe, competent patient care. To provide this care the nurse uses highly complex analytic skills to make clinical decisions. In deciding on nursing actions, the nurse must be able to apply reasoning abilities in a variety of patient care situations. The ability of the nurse to think in a clear, concise manner so that timely decisions are made is imperative to competent practice. To provide for continuity of care and clarity of patient goals the nurse must also be able to communicate clinical judgements and decisions to the other members of the health team. It is the legal obligation of the nurse to ensure accurate documentation of the nursing care provided. The nurse does this by recording in a clear, concise manner reflective of professional and legal standards. The recording of patient care is reflective of the nurse's ability to apply a logical thinking framework known as the Nursing Process.

In daily practice the nurse must make sound clinical decisions using a logical approach to thinking. To effectively solve patient problems most nurses use the Nursing Process as a thinking framework. This framework provides an orderly, logical, problem-solving approach for administering nursing care so that the patient's needs for such care are met comprehensively and effectively (Doenges & Moorehouse, 1992). It is a five step thinking framework based on a nursing assessment of patient needs in which subjective and objective data is collected. The data is analyzed, the problem is identified and plans are created for resolution of the problem. The patient problem is resolved through a goal directed approach which includes the implementation of nursing interventions. The

validity of the goals and the outcomes of the interventions are evaluated in the final step of the process. According, each phase should be reflected in the patient care record.

Legally nurses are obligated to record the care given so that the health care team is aware of the current status of the patient and there is a permanent record of the patient's care. A commonly held rule is that " care not recorded is care not given." Therefore, the nurse must develop expertise in the accurate, thorough recording of nursing care in the patient's chart which reflects a logical, decisional process. One source of the record of the patient's care which is based on the nursing process is found in the narrative nursing note. This narrative recording of care received must meet the legal reguirements of accuracy and clarity. The note must be precise, relevant, complete, specific and significant. These perfections of thought (Paul, 1990) must appear in all the narrative notations within the five steps of the process including the assessments, problem statements, goals, interventions and the evaluation phase. At each step in this process the nurse must use critical thinking standards to reflect on the validity of the information provided. To support the validity of problem statements, nursing goals and interventions adequate evidence in the form of subjective and objective data must be presented. To resolve the patient problem the nurse must analyze sources of difficulty and identify nursing approaches. The focus of the evaluation phase is a critical analysis of the successful achievement the goals and interventions ensuring that professional care standards are met. While reflecting on the desired outcomes and always looking for evidence of resolution of the patient problem the nurse evaluates the quality of care. Finally, the nurse writes evaluative statements which monitor the patient status toward healthful

resolution of the identified problem. The responsible nurse critically reflects on the quality of thinking that has occurred at each step of the process and monitors the thought processes for imperfections of thought (Paul, 1990). These imperfections of thought include a lack of clarity, incompleteness, vagueness, inaccuracies, irrelevance of written patient data and stated outcomes.

In becoming self-responsible for the quality of patient care the student must have experience in self-evaluation. One such experience is to have the student critically analyzing the quality of the nursing care provided as reflected in the narrative nursing notes. Through this learning activity the student begins to develop independence in thinking and learns to defend their nursing actions. This is accomplished by having the student use the standards of the profession, legal standards and critical thinking standards to assess the nursing notes. Using self-evaluation techniques by which to measure and assess their own professional functioning promotes the creation of a nurse who can think independently and has confidence in the professional responsibilities required for independent practice. The nurse who uses the standards for care and is able to demonstrate these standards in practice is considered to be professionally competent.

In summary, teaching strategies which promote critical thinking skills in nursing students can be designed also as a means to promote self-evaluation. The use of analytic writing exercises which are based on the narrative nursing notes written by the student are a source of independent learning. Students given opportunities to reflect on the

nursing notes they have recorded can, through analysis begin to recognize the imperfections in their thought processes (Paul, 1990). Patterns of thinking can be illuminated and assessed according to legal, professional and critical thinking standards. Through this analytic self-evaluation process the student learns that the development of thinking in nursing is linked to the sophistication of their ability to apply the Nursing Process. As the student increases in ability to self evaluate their thinking they achieve greater independence in their clinical practice and internalized the thinking standards of the profession of nursing thereby moving toward independent professional practice. To meet professional standards for nursing practice in British Columbia it is essential that new graduates are independent critical thinkers who are open to examine and reflect on their own thinking so that safe, quality patient care is assured.

References:

Doenges, Marilynn E. & Moorhouse, Mary F. (1992). Application of nursing process and nursing diagnosis: An interactive text, Philadelphia: F.A.Davis Company

Paul, Richard, (1990). Critical thinking: What every person needs to survive in a rapidly changing world, Rohnert Park, Ca.: Center for Critical Thinking and Moral Critique, Sonoma State University.

Registered Nurses Association of British Columbia. (1990). Nursing competencies and skills required of the new graduate. Vancouver,B.C.: Author